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Students of social pedagogy and intergenerational solidarity

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to present the intergenerational solidarity as fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages, a major prerequisite for social cohesion and a foundation of formal public welfare and informal care systems. A sample of research was included students who study Social Pedagogy (as holders of the specified values). For the comparison was used tool and selected results of the Flash Eurobarometer 269, titled "Intergenerational Solidarity".

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1. Introduction to the issue of intergenerational solidarity

Intergenerational solidarity is a multidimensional phenomenon. "All societies exhibit intergenerational solidarity, as core element of intergenerational relationships, which bonds generations that share common interests, feelings of affections and affinity, reciprocity, mutual care, and protection (Cruz-Saco, Zelenev, 2011, p. 10)". The need for the reflection of this topic becomes even more crucial in a period of social changes associated with population ageing.

The rate of population ageing has greatly accelerated, and this will increase pressure on the society. There are a number of aspects which definitely belong to the field of intergenerational solidarity and to which social scientists might usefully contribute. Donati (In Malinvaud, ed., 2002, p. 57) commented that while many old issues (such as family poverty, multi-problem families, etc.) persist, a new scenario of difficulties has appeared: the ceaseless worsening of generational relation. He introduced issues such are: another form and roles of family, imbalance in the

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distribution of resources (to young people or to older people?), children and youth are increasingly isolated from the adults who constitute their principal socializing agents (the cultural transmission from one generation to the other is losing ground), and that social welfare systems have shown themselves as lacking a real orientation to the links between generations. While contract across generations and age groups represents the norms operating at the micro and macro levels of social structure in a given socio-historical context (Bengston, Oyama, 2007).

As a first politics response was during the 1970s led to the convening in 1982 of the first-ever World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna, Austria. European first relevant document was European Commission communication entitled *Towards a society for all ages* in 1999, expressively subtitled *Promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity*. This document was prepared for occasion of International Year of Older Persons, 1999: *Activities and legacies* (it was under the auspices of the United Nations). This document represented a step forward in the conceptual framework of a society for all, 2012 age. This vision is one that has been embraced around the world. The need to respond to the current and expected demographic changes resulted to Assembly of the United Nations in 2002 in Madrid. For example the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), states that solidarity between generations at all levels — in families, communities and nations — is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages, a major prerequisite for social cohesion and a foundation of formal public welfare and informal care systems (UN, 2013). Czech government followed the Madrid Plan and published a program of preparation for the aging population (Kitlínská, 2012). It was followed by a National Action Plan to support positive aging for the years 2013 to 2017. The latest national document in which deals with the issue of intergenerational solidarity is the *Social Inclusion Strategy 2014 - 2020*.

Intergenerational solidarity can therefore be seen as a social equaliser, in which each party exchanges with the other to obtain what they lack (Active aging report, 2011). All generations should be included in the debate and policy-making. Intergenerational solidarity can by solve in different policy frameworks. Various policy areas can help to provide an environment where the contribution of everyone could be valued and everyone could be empowered to play a part.

Current (demographic) evolution in developed countries is very challenging not only for the economic development, but also for their social system. And it is raises the question of quality of life— both for senior citizens and for the younger generation who must bear the burden of an inverted age pyramid (Active aging report, 2011). The challenges are traditionally sketched out in two contrasting ways. According to European Union (2010): 1) there is a concern about the financial sustainability of public welfare systems, which are affected adversely by a rising share of older age population. 2) there is a importance of fiscal prudence in public spending, it is also considered imperative that European social welfare systems continue to provide adequate retirement incomes and sufficient basic social services, such as health and social care, in old age. (EU, 2010) Intergenerational solidarity is not a one-way relationship between the active young population and inactive older people (Active aging report, 2011).

To the above is needed a mechanism for supporting mutually beneficial exchanges, both monetary and non-monetary, between generations. These exchanges are too often seen as one way: younger workers paying taxes to support older workers' pension benefits and healthcare costs. But the exchanges, in fact, go in both directions. Forwards, towards younger generations, are investments in infrastructure, innovation and environmental protection. Backwards, to older generations, are pensions and public and family care for older people. The family and the government are the best institutions to ensure this intergenerational exchange works. (OECD, 2011)

Cruz-Saco and Zelenev (2011) says, that the relationship between intergenerational solidarity and social cohesiveness is one of a circular causality, as more solidarity results in more cohesiveness and vice versa, allowing conflicts and tensions to be minimized. So perhaps the simplest definition of intergenerational solidarity is “social cohesion between generations”(Bengston, Oyama, 2007). Intergenerational solidarity is widely understood as social cohesion between generations. Most frequently, however, it refers to relations between the younger and older generations of those living, including child-parent relationships, social participation of elderly people and children in communities, affordability of pensions and care of the elderly (UN, 2013).

It must be noted that the body of research relating to intergenerational approaches to community building and social cohesion outside the family is still limited Hatton-Yeo (In Sanchez, ed., 2007). Hatton-Yeo cited Pain, that existing work can be divided into4 interconnected areas: a) issues of transfer and transmission between generations, b) a focus on personal relationships and the amount and nature and implications of contact between the generations,

in most cases who are related, c) a smaller amount of work examining issues of personal identity, d) a burgeoning concern with the evaluation of intergenerational policy and practice.

Our research's objects are the opinions on extra-familial intergenerational relationship. Specifically, we are interested in the views of the young generation who are in preparation for the profession of social pedagogue.

2. Why social pedagogues?

Young people are sometimes overlooked. However their contributions can be and are significant. Educational institutions and advocates of quality of life have an important role to play in connecting generations and providing opportunities for dialogue among generations. Especially young people who are prepared to qualified teaching staff in the field of social pedagogy in the field of education and social services.

Samples of research were included students who study Social Pedagogy (as holders of the specified values). Consequently, social pedagogues work within a range of different settings, from early years through adulthood to working with disadvantaged adult groups as well as older people. To define the subject of social pedagogy could be a very difficult task. Different countries have different cultures and social issues. Thus the view on social pedagogy differs from country to country. This discipline is based on the ideas of sociology, social work, pedagogy, philosophy and some other practical sciences. Social pedagogic theory builders draw upon social and educational perspectives, particularly, when these vistas enlighten each other (Paul, 2013, p. 3).

This paper deals with relatively new field of study of social pedagogy, which has begun to realize in the Czech Republic since mid-1990s. Social Pedagogy is an academic discipline concerned with the theory and practice of holistic education and care. Czech social pedagogues usually study at the university level (there is also possibility to study at the college where they will get a DiS. degree). The academics in Czech Republic separate Social Pedagogy from the social work and they look at them as at two separate disciplines. Social pedagogy can be studied in many places in the country. Tomas Bata University in Zlín (Czech Republic) offers social pedagogy as bachelor study programme (standard length of study is 3 years) and after finishing bachelor degree offers master programme (standard length of study is 2 years), newly doctoral programme. This field of the study is presented on web: Field of study subjects have an interdisciplinary character and are structured so that afflicted the basic problems that the social educator currently meets in society. Emphasis is placed on experiential learning, is practical activities of students in seminars and exercises. The acquired knowledge and skills students will develop and validate the practices in school and social organizations. Graduates after graduation are able to control the operation of school or social organizations to create educational and social projects, implement comprehensive educational and social activities, and to relevant educational and social research. (www.utb.cz)

Paul (2013) distinguishes aim of activity in included areas: In social policy is crucial a labour market orientation for social integration. For social workers is important social disadvantage and exclusion orientation, with emphasis on support through self-help. And for social pedagogues is key developing the personal and palliating conflict boundaries by nurturing individual potential and achievement. From actor's perspective is empowerment of individuals in their setting (can be paternalistic and educationalist), preconceived notions of the good individual and the good society.

3. Methodology

The aim of the research was to identify and describe the opinions of students of study programme Social pedagogy in Zlín on selected aspects of intergenerational solidarity. With regard to the stated aim and the research problem, a quantitative research strategy, method and a technique of survey data collection were chosen. It was elected a quantitative approach to research. The objective of this methodology is to gather data on attitudes, opinions, impressions and beliefs of human subjects. Quantitative research is about asking people for their opinions in a structured way so that you can produce hard facts and statistics. The object of the collection of census data is to accurately describe basic information about a population at a particular point in time. The objective of this descriptive research is to map the terrain of a specific phenomenon - intergenerational solidarity. It is very difficult to measure intergenerational solidarity (OECD, 2011). It was used tool and selected results of the Flash Eurobarometer 269, titled "Intergenerational Solidarity" (European Commission, 2009). The Flash Eurobarometer 269 is useful in understanding intergenerational relationships and how different generations view each other. The

Flash Eurobarometer Intergenerational solidarity (Flash No 269) was conducted in 2009 in order to examine EU citizens' opinions about: a) existing relations between the younger and older generations, b) costs of an ageing population – particularly in terms of pensions and elderly care, c) the need for pension and social security reforms, d) ways in which older people contribute to society – financially and in a broader way, e) existing possibilities for autonomous living for elderly EU citizens, f) the provision of elderly care and support by social services, g) the role of public authorities in promoting intergenerational solidarity. The results provide the current status of intergenerational solidarity across 27 EU countries; provide perceptions on this matter of about 27,000 Europeans across all EU Member States. The questionnaire prepared for this survey was translated in national language(s) for each country of survey. The form of the questionnaire for the Czech Republic (Country Specific Questionnaire Czech Republic) was used for our research. Our research presents here only the key results.

The first step in population sampling was identifying the population which the researcher wishes to learn more about. The population was defined in keeping with the objectives of the research. The target population was the entire group a researcher was interested in; the group about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions: all students who study branch of study Social pedagogy at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, full time form of study. Method of sampling selection was intentional sampling. Intentional sampling methods are non-probabilistic procedures that select a group of individuals for a sample with the purpose of meeting specific prescribed criteria. Specific criteria for this research: branch of study (qualification and expertise in the field of social solidarity), full time form of study (age of respondent represent young generation). This research represents only students at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, because there are no data on the number of student of the branch of study social pedagogy in the Czech Republic.

The sampling consists of 219 respondents who were students of social pedagogy and one incomplete questionnaire was excluded. Age structure of the students varies from 19 to 28 years old. 214 of the students (98%) were younger or same aged 24 years old and 5 respondents (2%) were older than 24 years old. In Flash Eurobarometer 269 were included 3 871 respondents (14%) from 15 to 24 years old. If we compare gender structure of our sampling there were 195 women (89%) and 24 men (11%).

4. Results

4.1 Relations between the different generations

More than 71% of the students of social pedagogy agree that *young people and older people do not easily agree on what is best for society* (16% strongly agree and 55,7% somewhat agree). Less than one third of the students disagree (somewhat disagree 16,9%, strongly disagree 7,8%). Compared to EU respondents of Flash Eurobarometer 269 - most strongly agree 28% and 41% somewhat agree.

Nearly 90% of the students disagreed that *older people are a burden on society* (63% strongly disagree, 26,9% somewhat disagree. No one strongly agreed and only 7,3% somewhat agreed. These are better results than in EU (85% disagree, 14% agree).

Slight majority of respondents agreed that *the media exaggerates the risk of a conflict between generations* (EU 61%). 6,8% of the students strongly agree and 46,6% somewhat agree. On the other hand more than one third disagree with this statement (5,5% strongly, 29,2% somewhat). About 12% were not able answer this question.

11% strongly agreed, and another 37,9% somewhat agreed that *because there will be higher numbers of older voters, political decision-makers will pay less attention to the needs of young people*. This is more than in Eurobarometer (14% strongly agreed, 29% somewhat agree). Majority of the students disagree (51%) but compared to EU, only 8,7% of the students strongly disagreed with this statement (EU 20%).

Important difference was found between Eurobarometer and the students in the statement *that older people work until a later age, fewer jobs will be available for younger people*. Similar proportion (26% EU, 27,4% the students) strongly agree, but 45,2% of the students somewhat agree compared to 30% of respondents of EU. 23,3% of the students of social pedagogy disagree (18,7% somewhat disagree, 4,6% strongly disagree).

Compared to EU (53%) are only 29,2% of the students persuaded that *older women are at a greater risk of falling into poverty than older men in their country* (5,5% strongly agree, 23,7% somewhat agree). About one third disagree (27,4% somewhat disagree, 5,5% strong disagree). 37,9% of our respondents had no opinion on the topic or did not know what to answer.

Only one in ten students agreed that *companies which mostly employ young people perform better than those that employ people of a different (older) age*. This is lower number compared to EU (25%). On the other hand more

than 58% of the students disagreed (EU 70%). 42,5% of the students somewhat disagree and 16% strongly disagree. Significant number of the students did not respond (30%).

4.2 Affordability of pensions and elderly care; the need for pension reforms

The students most frequently agreed that *in coming decades, governments will no longer be able to pay for pensions and care for older people* (31% strong agree, 45% somewhat agree). This is 76%, compared to 58% in EU. Approximately 3 in 10 respondents of EU disagreed, and only 1 in 10 students disagreed. 13,7% of the students had no opinion on the topic or did not know what to answer.

Over 71% of the students responded that *people in employment will be increasingly reluctant to pay taxes and social contributions to support older people*. Specifically 20,5% strong agree and 50,7% somewhat agree. Slight half of EU Eurobarometer's respondents agreed (52%). Significant difference is between respondents who disagreed (42% EU, 13,7% of the students). 12,3% of the students somewhat disagree and 1,7% strong disagree (16% EU). A certain percentage of the students did not respond (15,1%).

The total level of agreement for the statement that *government's expenditure on young people and on education is too little, in comparison with the amount spent on older people*, ranged from 46% in EU to 36,1% in our research (11% strong agree, 25,1% somewhat agree). Roughly the same difference is in disagreement (EU 43%, the students 32,5%). The disagreement of the students is split into 27,9% somewhat disagree and 5% strong disagree. Also significant part of the students (31,1%) did not answer.

Almost half of respondents in EU (48%) agree that *older people accept that major pension reforms are needed to the ease the burden on working-age people* but only 23,7% of student also agree (2,7% strong agree, 21% somewhat agree). Similar results are in the area of disagreement (39% EU, 43,8% the students). But once again considerable part of the students (32,4%) has no opinion on the topic or did not know what to answer.

Huge percentage of Eurobarometer's respondents (84%) said that *their country's government must make much more money available for pensions and care for the elderly*. Also 7 in 10 the students agreed with this statement (16,9% strong agreed, 52,1% somewhat agreed). Only 14% in EU and 18,3% of the students chose strong disagree (10% and 14,2% respectively) or somewhat disagree (4% and 4,1% respectively).

There is a consensus in the statement that *government should make it easier for older people to continue working beyond their normal retirement age (if they so desire)*. In the EU agree 66% and 60,7% of the students (13,7% strong agree, 47% somewhat agree). Nearly one third of the students (31,5%) disagree with this statement (19,6% somewhat disagree, 11,9% strong disagree). 7,8% of student did not respond.

4.3 Autonomous living for the elderly, elderly care and support by social services

The level of agreement regarding the statement that *doctors, nurses and professional carers in the respondent's country are sufficiently well trained to care for the special needs of older people* was 64 % in EU (25% strongly agree, somewhat agree 38%) and 54,4% by the students (7,8% strongly agree, 46,6% somewhat agree). Similar figures are about disagreement (29% EU, 29, 7% the students) but the students rather somewhat disagree 25,1% than strongly disagree (4,6%).

About 25% EU Eurobarometer's respondents agree that *people who have a responsibility of care for older family members at home receive good support from social services* but only 1 in 10 of the students agree. The total level of disagreement reached 65% in the EU and 74,8% by the students. Almost 15% of the students did not respond.

The next question compared the responses about statement that *in our country there are sufficient social services to support frail older people so that they can stay in their own home*. Most than one third of EU respondents (35%) agree but only 22,3% of the students agree. Majority somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement (59% EU, 68,5% of the students).

In sum 8 in 10 respondents expressed agreement than *many frail older people cannot live autonomously because their homes are not adapted to meet their needs*. Dates of the Eurobarometer shows 49% strongly agree and 35% somewhat agree. 24,2% of the students strongly agree and 57,5% somewhat agree. Only about 11% of all respondents disagreed with the statement (11% EU, 11,5% of the students).

The results for the statement that *older people would contribute much more to society if they could more easily move around* are significantly different. 78% of Eurobarometer's respondents somewhat (40%) or strongly (38%) agreed with this statement but less than half of the students agreed with this proposition (somewhat agree 36,5%, strongly agreed 6,4%). Over 37% of the students disagreed and 20% did not know what to answer.

4.4 The role of public authorities in promoting intergenerational solidarity

There is an interesting overview if we compare agreeably answers to the question *if schools should promote better relations between young and old*. In total 89% of EU and 87,3% of the students agree but strongly agree (56% EU, 27,9% the students) and somewhat agree (33% EU, 59,4 the students). About 1 in 10 respondents disagree (EU 9%, the students 10%).

Only a tiny 3,2% of the students agree that *government does a good job in promoting a better understanding between young and old*. This is really a small number compared to 27% in EU. More than 79% of the participating students somewhat disagree (35% in EU) and 35,6% strongly disagree (29% in EU). About 17,4% of the students has no opinion on the topic or did not know what to answer.

There is a wide agreement among the students (92%) that *local authorities should support associations and initiatives that foster stronger relations between young and older people*. Strongly agree 22,4% of the students (54% EU) and somewhat agree 60,7% (38% EU). About 12% of the students expressed disagreement (6% in EU).

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this century, in many countries all over the world, families and children have come to face new dilemmas related to the lack of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational equity (Donati In Malinvaud, ed., 2002, p. 55).

The paper deals with some aspects of intergenerational solidarity, which are most often mentioned with regard to social policy. The research part of the paper was focused on students of social pedagogy. This student represents young generation and also a potential objects and/or participants of social policy. The respondents of the sampling were students of social pedagogy at Thomas Bata University in Zlín. Although for data collection was used a questionnaire utilized in the international survey (Eurobarometer), we can not say, that there was measured the rate of intergenerational solidarity by target group. But some ideas about the statements can build elementary overview about perception of some aspects.

It can be noted that the students of social pedagogy expressed a certain level of solidarity but the solidarity was influenced by possible threat of different generation. The students felt that the state should be the most responsible player about intergeneration issue but about the actual realisation are sceptical. The student as a further social professional rather negatively assesses the preparedness of the system of social services in the field of intergenerational care. According to students schools and communities should have the greatest responsibility as a natural environment.

We should find a ways how to present the intergenerational themes to students, professionals and general public to realize that not only age distant generations could be mutually beneficial. After all intergenerational solidarity can be seen as a desirable value in itself: when generations have a positive view of one another or there is consensus between generations on the way forward (OECD, 2011).

The purpose of this paper is not to present an exhaustive inventory of the issue nor to list all interesting initiatives existing in this area, but to initiate discussions with all relevant actors. We believe that this paper should be the impulse that can wake interest about this theme.

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